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ABSTRACT

Some men are not sensitive to women and the way some men treat or think of women is a problem. Men, especially those in key leadership roles, need to challenge other male colleagues and students and to speak out in support of women if the relationship between men and women is to improve. More specifically, male administrators need to make clear value statements and engage students in an examination of their attitudes and behavior surrounding those values. The goal is to instill a spirit that extends beyond purely attending to what is obligated by law. Men need to encourage each other to examine their personal attitudes and feelings toward women. Male leaders need to talk candidly about rapes that occur on college campuses. Male administrators need to learn to listen as a way of becoming more informed and sensitive. Men need to write and distribute material that speaks to men about rape. A male administrator needs to take a lead role in raising the campus community's consciousness about sexism. Men need to listen to and learn from women so that they have the knowledge and ability to carry on a dialogue. (The author's experiences at the University of Maine at Farmington are described. A list of 11 questions to consider when evaluating events/activities on campus is included.) (ABL)

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MEN: WHERE ARE YOU?

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MEN: WHERE ARE YOU?

"He walked up to where I was eating in the dining room leaned over and stuck his face in my plate of food and proceeded to eat. I told him to go away and he said, 'come on give me a kiss'..."

"I'm afraid if you say anything to him [about this rape], he or some friends will come after me..."

"He was joking around." "He didn't mean to do it." "She was fooling around too." These are male faculty responses to a woman who had her sweatpants pulled down in class. The judicial review committee took no action. Two high level male administrators were incensed, but said nothing publicly. Some male students demonstrated that they thought the whole thing was "a big joke." A letter, citing the male's action as not acceptable and sent to all students, was criticized by some male faculty for "unfairly picking on the male student." As summarized by one woman student: "If you think this is bad, you ought to see the other stuff that goes on."

The preceding paragraphs painfully demonstrate the obvious; some men are not sensitive to women and the way some men treat or think of women is a problem. My conclusion, drawn from these and other experiences, is that men, especially those in key leadership roles, need to challenge other male colleagues and students, and speak out in support of women if the relationship between women and men is to improve. More specifically, male administrators need to make clear value statements and engage students in an examination of their attitudes and behavior

surrounding those values. The goal is to instill a spirit that extends beyond purely attending to what is obligated by law. In what ways can men speak out?

I invited my male colleagues to meet and discuss the question and respond to my contention that there was a problem with the way men treated women on campus. Three times as many women as men came to voice that, "yes, there is a problem." Fellow males who did not come asked: "how many complaints do you have?" My response included more examples, and suggested that numbers should not be the primary motivator for taking action. After several meetings the far ranging dialogue focused on male behavior in the classroom. All were appalled when they heard a story such as: "I told a student 'please be quiet'; he said, 'you can go stick it honey.' I felt like throwing him out of class, but I didn't know if my colleagues would support me if I did." She received the support she needed and faculty began to develop some unwritten norms for appropriate classroom behavior.

The student attention was roused by an open letter stating: "there is a problem with the way men treat women at UMF...

1. Males sit in the high traffic areas or in the dining halls and publicly score women.
2. The language males use to address women students, faculty and staff is inappropriate.
3. Date rape happens at UMF..."

This letter was distributed personally to people congregated in high traffic areas and in the eating centers. Students debated

the issues among themselves, with the author in public areas and at special meetings. Countless written and verbal comments covered all sides of the issues. Many more examples of harassment of both men and women were shared. Some men were mad because they thought all men were made to "look bad." But men were talking and sharing what they either do or do not support. At an open meeting a few days into the debate a woman's response to another woman refocused the dialogue. "You said, 'there's no problem here.' Don't you know someone that's been date raped here?" There was a near instant buzz of recognition of the point this woman made. An open work group on female-male relations commenced.

To perpetuate the dialogue among students, faculty, and staff male leaders can encourage a variety of activities. These include having men engage in their own personal development, do more listening, produce material that speaks to men, join the initiative in getting information to women, take a lead role in raising matters of sexism, speak out against events that degrade women, publicly acknowledge occurrences of rape, learn how to talk about women's issues with women, confront inappropriate male activity, and engage male students so they will speak out.

Men need to encourage each other to examine their personal attitudes and feelings toward women. The reason is based on the premise that one must work on one's own issues before one can help others. Individuals can ask of themselves, "how am I contributing to the problem?", as opposed to quickly looking at others and suggesting change for them. I know I have learned,

changed, and adjusted, and that that process will continue.

Male leaders need to talk candidly about rapes that occur on campus. Within the span of two weeks there were three reported rapes. The women were not ready to go to the police. They were willing to make a short statement which was projected on a screen in a high traffic area. "On March 20, a woman student told a UMF employee she was raped by a UMF male student who has raped more than one UMF woman over the past year. ...By speaking out against rape and treating the incidents cited with the utmost seriousness, you can make a difference and provide a show of support for all women who have been raped." The intent was to show that rape is a problem, to encourage discussion, to cause people to be careful, and to communicate the institution's position on rape.

Male administrators need to learn to listen as a way of becoming more informed and sensitive. The raped women shared their stories with me. They included me in their discussions with personnel from the district attorney's office. Until this experience I did not feel the anguish and hurt; sense the confusion; hear the self-blame, the anger, the deep breaths, and the struggle to talk; see scared eyes and clenched hands. My sense of a difference between rape and date rape disappeared. I also learned that I knew absolutely nothing about how the system works once a person files a complaint. What pained me deeply about this experience was learning that these women were not trusting enough to tell their friends. They were scared that they would not be supported. People would blame them or think

they were "loóse." By their own admission; "I know I'm not to blame... I've been to the date rape workshops." The community lacked a clear sense of what it collectively valued. Women must know that they will be supported if they report rape.

Men need to write and distribute material that speaks to men about rape. These incidents caused me to review many rape pamphlets. Three brochures focused on men. I concluded that rape literature is primarily written for women and rape is a women's problem. Rape is as much a male problem as it is a woman's problem. Men need to make that message clear to students in order to get at such attitudes as: "I hope you're on the pill, because if you're not you got a problem." Material written by men and supported by a large group of campus men (faculty, students, staff) needs to be as prevalent as the current literature.

Men need to take initiative in distributing important information to women. In all the brochures reviewed, (all institutions in Massachusetts surveyed) no piece outlined what could happen after a rape was reported to the police. The common view of the process, as depicted on television and in movies, is one that is scary and one in which a woman has little control. My sense is that once the UMF rape victims talked to the victim's advocate of the district attorney's office they realized they had some control. The questions I heard women ask would make excellent sections for material that addresses the question: What happens after I file a report? Do my parents have to know? What can happen to this person? What is the likelihood of

success with my case? Suppose I change my mind and want to stop the process? When does it get in the newspapers? Where are the lines of confidentiality? How can I be protected from this person once he knows I have told? How many times do I have to repeat my story? What is a grand jury? What kinds of questions are asked? When do I have to face the rapist? Can I be sued for defamation of character? Accompanying the responses should be the voice of a woman who has been through the legal process. She can share her feelings about the process of reporting a rape and pressing charges.

A male administration needs to take a lead role in raising the campus community's consciousness about sexism. A woman's organization advertised an event where they auctioned themselves off as a way of raising money. The "Mr. UMF Show," a body builders contest, was promoted with sexually suggestive pictures. A student had these words posted on his door: "Girls come, join in...volunteer work you can do lying down...starring...2 biggest men...where it really counts!" A student group released an agent's promotional photograph of a woman in chains at the mercy of a man. Individuals involved with these types of advertising should be confronted in an educational manner and the promotional material publicly questioned. This promotional photo was distributed to the campus, as an example that males need to be more aware. One comment, reflective of some male responses, was "...but the real question is why would a woman let someone put a chain around her neck and lead her like a beast of burden? This isn't a male's fault..." My response was: "but shouldn't a male

be sensitive enough not to even suggest such a thing; why degrade another human being?"

Men need to be the first to speak out against the showing of pornographic films, the hosting of wet T-shirt contests, and the like. A discussion of the issues these types of events raise for men and women can be led by men. I hosted a noon hour discussion for faculty and staff on: "what female-male issues arise from a male strip show?" First everyone wanted to know if students could run one as proposed. The reply was a refusal to decide because the debate would shift from female-male relationship issues to the decision. Next they asked: "is it legal and what about our public image?" The response was: "I don't care about legalities or image: what female-male relationship issues or questions does this raise that we should discuss with students?" The large group had difficulty identifying discussion points. After several meetings, a list of issues for students to consider materialized. The following questions are applicable to a variety of situations:

1. Over the past five years we have made a number of decisions that suggest individuals, particularly women, have the right to be respected. In what ways does this show support or no support for that general value?

2. Is this type of event consonant with what a university environment should be?

3. Consider whether or not a male review lets men mimic women and therefore publicly trivialize what women have faced for years.

4. Given the common description of the atmosphere of review shows, what does this suggest about how men regard women?

5. Is it proper to take a segment of the population and set up reverse discrimination entertainment for the viewing audience pleasure? Is this a form of degradation? Are past wrongs redressed by reversing the roles?

6. Is it a commonly held attitude that a promiscuous female is perceived negatively in comparison to a similarly behaving male? Does this type of show promote this attitude?

7. For years women have been placed on stage to strip. Does this degrade women? Is it a form of sexual exploitation? Does it suggest that men are only interested in women's physical bodies? What role for women does this suggest to men?

8. Does this show treat men as sex objects? Is it a form of sexual exploitation? If one believes that women should not be treated as sex objects should one promote the treatment of males as sex objects?

9. Is this type of show appropriate given that human dignity is something valued at UMF? Does this type of show dehumanize men?

10. Should an institution like UMF be involved in the celebration of the whole self or the exploitation of aspects of the self?

11. Does this type of activity help men performers and those persons in the audience communicate more sensitively with one another? Does it lead to or help individuals recognize and understand more intimate relationships with others?

Men need to listen to and learn from women so that they have the knowledge and ability to carry on a dialogue. I went to a meeting of the group that was considering sponsoring the strip show. Present were nine women and no men. With the help of my colleagues I had prepared the list of previously cited values questions and felt I was well prepared. Ten minutes into the discussion I realized how unprepared I really was. I asked, "what questions does this type of event raise for you as women?" There were blank stares; the silence was broken with "what do you mean?" After some time I passed out my list of issues. However, for the next hour conversation kept refocusing on how to run the event so it would not be objectionable. I kept bringing the discussion back to my central issues, but I was conscious that I was a male trying to talk about women's feelings and attitudes. When I cited some examples of men's insensitive treatment of women students, the women present minimized it, passed it off as "no big thing." I found myself groping for responses and questions that would move the conversation forward.

Male administrators need to engage male students to the degree that these students will speak out on their own. The confrontational approach I used upset a large group of vocal men. They felt my position was making all men "look bad." "We're not all that way!", was commonly heard. "If you're not that way, then show the women you're not that way!", was my response. With some help they created a fourteen point position statement and petitioned other men for their signatures. Some examples from

the statement are: "rape is always the fault of the rapist;" "rape is as much a man's issue as it is a woman's issue;" "the word slut pertains to both men and women;" "we do care and we are sensitive." The male students have helped edit a rape brochure that speaks to men; their names are on the brochure. They set up a public display advocating their position and conducted a survey on discrimination. Personal essays written by men about male treatment of and interaction with women are being shared publicly. Student voices are powerful, but it takes time, patience and concentrated effort to generate them.

Men speaking out will not resolve the issues in one or two semesters. What can make a difference is men joining with women to speak together and students discussing the issues among themselves in a dining room or in a class or at congregation points. I have hope for a better future when I hear students express their opinion and challenge each other's thinking. After reading the following typed and signed message from a male student I felt encouraged:

> "This past vacation, I, like the rest of the students who attend the university, received a letter regarding how women are treated at ...
> You mentioned that a girls pants were pulled down...You indicated the class was humored and the act discussed as a joke. It is quite

obvious to me that behavior of

that sort should not be tolerated..."

A year later I heard two men telling others how they told a guy who looked like he wanted to take advantage of a woman to "leave her alone."

[illegible] continue. In the rumor mill there [illegible] who see how many women they can have [illegible] students told me: "I told him I [illegible] sex; he said, 'fine, no problem'; later he impregnated me against my objections; I trusted him because he said 'fine no problem'." Another woman shared that "a woman on television...(a soap opera) was refusing a man's advances and a male student [watching the program] said, 'I'd slap her around.' It was said in jest, but [that] didn't make it any less shocking."

"Excuse me for having to bring this to an end, but I need to join Sue in a discussion with one of your fellow male students about his responsibility in some questionable sexual activity with a concerned woman... I'm sure he is confused because the [illegible]roommate told him to stay away... Both individuals bear [illegible]ility... No formal complaint was registered... I've [illegible] this tactic before,... but if I'm really a educator... he'll learn and I'll learn."